

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

VA PROVIDER EQUITY ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1058) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the role of podiatrists in the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1058

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “VA Provider Equity Act”.

SEC. 2. ROLE OF PODIATRISTS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) INCLUSION AS PHYSICIAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 7413. Treatment of podiatrists; clinical oversight standards

“(a) PODIATRISTS.—Except as provided by subsection (b), a doctor of podiatric medicine who is appointed as a podiatrist under section 7401(1) of this title is eligible for any supervisory position in the Veterans Health Administration to the same degree that a physician appointed under such section is eligible for the position.

“(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF CLINICAL OVERSIGHT STANDARDS.—The Secretary, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders, shall establish standards to ensure that specialists appointed in the Veterans Health Administration to supervisory positions do not provide direct clinical oversight for purposes of peer review or practice evaluation for providers of other clinical specialties.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7412 the following new item:

“7413. Treatment of podiatrists; clinical oversight standards.”.

(b) MODIFICATION AND CLARIFICATION OF PAY GRADE.—

(1) GRADE.—The list in section 7404(b) of such title is amended—

(A) by striking “PHYSICIAN AND DENTIST SCHEDULE” and inserting “PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON (MD/DO), PODIATRIC SURGEON (DPM), AND DENTIST AND ORAL SURGEON (DDS, DMD) SCHEDULE”;

(B) by striking, “Physician grade” and inserting “Physician and surgeon grade”; and

(C) by striking “PODIATRIST, CHIROPRACTOR, AND,” and inserting “CHIROPRACTOR AND”.

(2) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to a pay period of the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning on or after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF REDUCTION IN AMOUNT OF PENSION FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “September 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30, 2026”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1058, as amended, the VA Provider Equity Act. This legislation would recognize the professional contribution of hardworking podiatrists within the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system.

The VA standard for compensating podiatrists has not been updated in 41 years. In that time, education and training for podiatrists has been revolutionized.

As a result of the VA's failure to recognize and respond to advancements in podiatry practice, it has created significant disparities in pay and advancement opportunities for podiatrists practicing at the VA in comparison to their peers in the private sector.

Consequently, the VA struggles to recruit and retain experienced, qualified podiatrists—those we want caring for our veterans—at a time when veteran need for podiatry care is increasing.

This legislation would solve that problem by allowing VA podiatrists the opportunity to seek leadership opportunities at VA medical facilities and making podiatry pay equal to physician and dentist pay within the VA healthcare system.

I am grateful to my good friend, fellow veteran, and committee member, Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Health, for his leadership in recognizing what an important issue this is and being thoughtful and tenacious in pursuit of a solution to it.

I am proud to join Dr. WENSTRUP in fully supporting this legislation and urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 1058, as amended. The VA Provider Equity Act is a commonsense solution to a really important problem that is plaguing the VHA—a shortage of healthcare providers.

This legislation would allow VHA to attract the talented and experienced podiatrists it needs to better treat conditions caused by lower extremity injuries.

By allowing podiatrists the opportunity to advance within the VHA while earning pay comparable to what private sector podiatrists earn, VHA can better attract and retain these providers.

I appreciate the gentleman from Ohio, Dr. WENSTRUP's, work highlighting this, educating all of us on the committee, and making sure that the treatments of podiatrists between VHA and the private sector industry is aligned.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this good piece of legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP). Colonel Wenstrup is a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1058, the VA Provider Equity Act, as amended, which would strengthen access to the comprehensive first-class healthcare that veterans deserve.

Podiatric care is one of the top needs at VA medical centers across the country. Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan report high rate of musculoskeletal ailments resulting from lower extremity injuries inflicted by improvised explosive devices.

Veterans of previous wars also experience higher instances of foot and ankle ailments caused by aging, diabetes, and service-connected disabilities. All of this leads to increased demand for podiatric care at the VHA.

However, VA struggles to recruit and retain podiatrists due to a disparity in pay and leadership opportunities in comparison to both podiatrists in the private sector and to other physicians employed by the VA.

This is because VA first established standards for podiatrists in 1976, and podiatric education, training, and practice have changed considerably since that time. Nonetheless, VA's outdated standards have remained unchanged. This has translated into increased wait times. As of 2015, 93 percent of new podiatry patients wait more than 15 days for an appointment, and podiatry is the fourth most referred-out surgical service to community care.

My bill, H.R. 1058, the VA Provider Equity Act, would make VA's doctors of podiatric medicine equal to doctors of osteopathy and medical doctors within VA in terms of pay and ensure that VA podiatrists are eligible for the same promotions and leadership opportunities as other VA physicians, which is consistent with the private sector.

This bill will make it easier for VA to recruit and retain the specialists our veterans so desperately need. In turn, this will result in better care for veterans and savings to the taxpayer, as a recent study from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found that podiatry services provided to diabetic patients could have saved between \$29 million and \$97 million in 2014, in the State of California alone.

Mr. Speaker, as the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and the rest of our colleagues in Congress continue to work together to help our veterans receive the care they need, I urge the passage of this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, again, this is a smart piece of legislation. I thank the gentleman from Ohio for his work on this.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of H.R. 1058, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1058, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BONUS TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1690) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit an annual report regarding performance awards and bonuses awarded to certain high-level employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1690

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Department of Veterans Affairs Bonus Transparency Act".

SEC. 2. ANNUAL REPORT ON PERFORMANCE AWARDS AND BONUSES AWARDED TO CERTAIN HIGH-LEVEL EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 717 the following new section:

"§ 718. Annual report on performance awards and bonuses awarded to certain high-level employees

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that contains, for the most recent fiscal year ending before the submittal of the report, a description of the performance awards and bonuses awarded to Regional Office Directors of the Department, Directors of Medical Centers of the Department, Directors of Vet-

erans Integrated Service Networks, and any other individual employed in a senior executive position.

"(b) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following with respect to each performance award or bonus awarded to an individual described in such subsection:

"(1) The amount of each award or bonus.

"(2) The job title of the individual awarded the award or bonus.

"(3) The location where the individual awarded the award or bonus works.

"(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'appropriate committees of Congress' means—

"(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

"(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

"(2) The term 'individual' means—

"(A) a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5); or

"(B) any individual who occupies an administrative or executive position and who was appointed under section 7306(a) or section 7401(1) of this title.

"(3) The term 'senior executive position' means—

"(A) with respect to a career appointee (as that term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5), a Senior Executive Service position (as such term is defined in section 3132(a)(2) of title 5); and

"(B) with respect to an individual appointed under section 7306(a) or section 7401(1) of this title, an administrative or executive position."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 717 the following new item:

"718. Annual report on performance awards and bonuses awarded to certain high-level employees."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1690, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Bonus Transparency Act.

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to submit an annual report to specified congressional committees on the performance awards and bonuses presented to Senior Executive Service employees, SES employees.

I believe that, if you do excellent work, you should receive a bonus. I also believe such a bonus should be justified and that there should be some level of transparency regarding those who receive a bonus.

Mr. Speaker, I support Congresswoman TENNEY's bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2006, the VA Procurement Efficiency and Transparency Act.

This legislation will require VA to record any costs or savings it incurs as a result of using competitive procedures. The reporting requirement is limited to contracts reported in the Federal procurement data system and will ensure increased transparency in the VA.

It also requires VA to use standardized contracting templates throughout the entire VA. This will create an efficient system for VA contracting officers so they are not wasting man-hours developing multiple documents to award VA contracts.

Anyone who has been a Member of Congress and has dealt with VA contracts knows how difficult, confusing, and just, quite honestly, frustrating this is. So having standardized forms will improve oversight of these contracts so that all VA employees and contractors follow the same requirements for the same type of contract.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this smart legislation, efficiency in government, and help provide care in a more timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, I urge its support, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) who is the author of the bill.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank Chairman ROE and Ranking Member WALZ for prioritizing bipartisanship and putting our veterans ahead of politics. This committee's work is a testament to what we can achieve here in Congress when we put aside politics and focus on results.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Veterans Affairs Bonus Transparency Act requires the VA to submit a report to Congress at the end of each fiscal year listing the bonuses that were awarded to senior-level executives within the department.

In 2015, VA employees received more than \$177 million in bonuses, which was 24 percent more than they had received in 2014. The average bonus for a senior executive was \$10,000.

I have no doubt that the men and women of the VA serve our veterans admirably each day. In fact, I know that they do. In my own district, I have spoken with veterans who are grateful for the compassionate care they receive from the VA hospital in Syracuse as well as local VA clinics in Binghamton and Rome.

VA employees should be fairly compensated for their work and awarded for their achievements in service to our Nation's veterans.

It is also clear to me that there is more work to be done. Just recently, an audit of several VA facilities in